

KARACHI

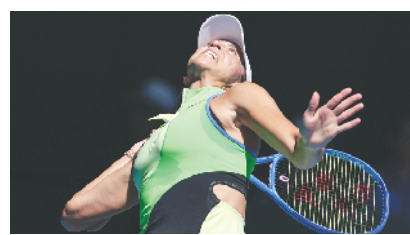
Sunset **06:13pm**
Sunrise (Tomorrow) **07:15am**

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum **10°C**
Maximum **24°C**
Humidity **27%**
Outlook **Sunny**

METRO

South



Sinner powers on, Keys exits as heatwave hits Melbourne

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Ruckus in PA as Muttahida demands judicial probe

By Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly's Monday session was disrupted by a strong protest by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) over the Gul Plaza tragedy as the opposition party demanded a judicial probe into the incident.

The session started with a low turnout, with only Jamaat-i-Islami's Muhammad Farooq present on the opposition benches. However, it quickly heated up when MQM-P members stormed in with placards, disrupting the Question Hour being conducted by Deputy Speaker Anthony Naveed.

As Question Hour began, Opposition Leader Ali Khurshidi tried to speak on a point of order but the chair told him that he would be given the floor after the business on the agenda.

The situation turned further tense when MQM-P members rushed the podium. They chanted slogans against the government and overpowered the deputy speaker's attempts to restore order. The deputy speaker finally wrapped up the Question Hour and handed the floor to Mr Khurshidi, who firmly stated that the assembly would not function until a judicial commission was formed.

The deputy speaker told him to move a motion and that the house would take a decision on it.

Mr Khurshidi, however, stood firm, saying opposition members would address the house about the Gul Plaza fire first. "No proceedings till they are heard," he declared and said that the chief minister told the lawmakers a one-sided story and then left the house.

Amid the ruckus, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar requested the chair to suspend the business on the agenda and allow all members to speak on the matter.

However, the MQM-P members continued protesting and demanding the formation of a judicial commission. The law minister requested the chair to adjourn the house if the opposition members were not willing to speak on the issue. Despite the deputy speaker's repeated requests, the house remained chaotic and the session was adjourned to Tuesday.



A POLICE vehicle is parked in front of Gul Plaza as an official secures the outer parameter of the gutted structure with yellow tape.
—Shakil Adil / White Star

Search operation at Gul Plaza wraps up 10 days after fire

• Gutted building to be demolished soon • Forensic experts from Punjab visit site, collect evidence • Police team formed to arrest those involved in blaze that killed 73

By Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: As authorities wrapped up the search and rescue operation at the Gul Plaza Shopping Mall after 10 days, a team of forensic experts from Lahore joined on Monday the probe into the Jan 17 devastating fire that claimed lives of 73 people and destroyed around 1,200 shops in the multi-storey building.

Rescue-1122 spokesperson Hassaanul Haseeb Khan told *Dawn* that the search and rescue operation was completed on Monday and the building was handed over to district administration.

He said that experts would likely assess the structure and subsequently, a demolition operation would be carried out on Tuesday (today).

He said they had marked the gutted building with three different colours — green colour showing that nothing was recovered from the spot, red colour showing recovery of bodies and yellow colour indicating recovery of goods/valuables.

Mr Khan explained that a 'final' search was conducted at the insistence of shop-

keepers / management of the plaza as there were many shops in the basement which were intact or partially damaged.

73 deaths so far

Families of as many as 81 people reported them missing after the blaze. The rescuers found either bodies or the remains of as many as 73 persons, but eight are still unaccounted for.

Police Surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed said: "Reference DNA samples have been collected from 55 family members for 63 missing persons.

"We have received one DNA profile which did not match with any family reference samples of the missing persons. Hence, we have requested once again to anyone who may not have submitted or does not know where to submit the reference DNA samples for identification of human remains," she added.

Investigation team formed

South DIG Syed Asad Raza said that Punjab Forensic Science Agency experts

visited the scene and collected samples.

Earlier in the day, he formed a five-member team for the "arrest of involved accused person(s) and impartial investigation" into the case.

"The investigation team shall make all-out and diligent efforts to arrest the accused person(s) by utilising all available resources," read a notification.

The DIG said that the plaza management, shopkeepers and watchmen were avoiding responsibility but "by default they are responsible".

He said that it was now "an open secret that the 11-year-old son of the owner of a flower shop was responsible for the blaze".

He said investigators recorded video statements of the owner, his son and another witness who saw the boy who lit the match that led to fire.

About closed gates, he said building watchmen said in their statements that they used to close the gates at 10pm on a daily basis.

The five-member team has been formed to make "all-out efforts" to arrest suspects in the Gul Plaza fire and to conduct an impartial probe into the incident.



SHC CJ inaugurates tribunal to deal with cases of water theft

KARACHI: Sindh High Court Chief Justice Zafar Ahmed Rajput on Monday formally inaugurated a special tribunal established to speed up the hearing and disposal of water theft cases in Karachi.

A ceremony was held at the headquarters of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC).

The tribunal has been constituted under the KWSC Act and it would be headed by Judge Munir Bakhsh Bhutto.

Following the inauguration, the chief justice, along with Mayor Murtaza Wahab, visited the Hydrants Cell Management and Complaint Management Centre, where he was briefed on operational mechanisms, water supply management, citizen grievance redress systems and ongoing actions against illegal connections.

Mayor Wahab described the establishment of the tribunal as a major milestone in safeguarding public interest, protecting citizens' rights, and preserving Karachi's vital water resources.

He added that the Sindh government would show no leniency toward those involved in water theft.

Speaking to *Dawn*, KWSC Chief Executive Ahmed Ali Siddiqui said that for the first time in the city's history, a special tribunal was established to ensure the swift hearing and disposal of water theft cases.

He said that the move was part of the efforts to tackle the city's pressing water challenges, including issues arising from ageing infrastructure and rampant illegal tapping of water supplies.

The CEO said that the establishment of this tribunal was expected to help curb water theft and impose stricter penalties on those involved.

He said that a temporary police station to deal with water theft cases was already functional, while a permanent police station was under construction in the KWSC Complex.—By Tahir Siddiqui

Second rabies case this month as girl bitten by stray dog in Sanghar brought to Karachi

Official says child is under palliative care at Indus Hospital

By Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: An eight-year-old girl bitten by a stray dog in Sanghar was presented with full-blown rabies at the Indus Hospital on Monday morning, raising the total number of reported cases of the deadly infectious disease to two this month.

Family sources told *Dawn* that the girl was bitten by a dog over a month ago and was initially treated at the civil hospital in Jhol city, district Sanghar, and then at another hospital in Hyderabad.

"We took her again to the hospital in

Hyderabad when she fell ill, showing signs of mental illness. The medical staff told us that there was nothing to worry about," the girl's uncle said, adding that the family took the child to another hospital, which referred them to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) in Karachi.

The family reported to the JPMC at 5am on Monday. "There was no hospital bed vacant, and we were asked to take our girl to the Indus Hospital," he added.

Speaking to *Dawn*, Aftab Gohar, Manager Rabies Prevention and Training Centre at the Indus Hospital, said the child sustained serious dog-bite with multiple deep wounds and needed immediate life-saving treatment.

"On arrival, the child had already developed clinical signs of rabies, hydrophobia and aerophobia. She is under palliative care now, and the family has been

counselled regarding the diagnosis and prognosis," he said, adding that once the virus infects the central nervous system and clinical symptoms appear, rabies is fatal in 100 per cent of cases.

According to Mr Gohar, this is the second rabies case reported this month. "The first case was brought to our knowledge on Jan 14 when we provided preventive rabies treatment to several members of a family that had lost their loved one to the disease," he said.

The male victim, in his late 40s, didn't consider the injury significant enough to get treatment, he said.

"The family told us that the wound was minor and ignored it. A few months later, the victim developed rabies and was reported at a public sector hospital, but it was too late by then. The family resided somewhere in Malir," he recalled.

The Indus Hospital this year so far has

seen nearly 1,600 new dog bite cases while around 1,300 cases have been reported at Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK). Around 800 cases have been reported at JPMC.

According to experts, rabies deaths are preventable with prompt post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) by stopping the virus from reaching the central nervous system. PEP consists of thorough wound washing, administration of a course of human rabies vaccine and, when indicated, rabies immunoglobulins (RIG).

If a person is bitten or scratched by a potentially rabid animal, they should immediately and always seek PEP treatment.

Last year, 22 people lost their lives to rabies. Over 41,000 dog-bite cases were reported at three tertiary care hospitals: over 16,000 at the Indus Hospital, over 12,000 at JPMC and over 13,000 at CHK.

CM opens Rs6.1bn Korangi causeway bridge for traffic

Built over Malir river, the project connects Korangi and Landhi industrial areas with Karachi's East and South districts

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday inaugurated the Rs6.1 billion Korangi causeway bridge.

The 1.4-kilometre-long bridge, which is built over the Malir river and connects Korangi Industrial Area with the city's East and South districts, has six lanes — three on each side — and nearly five million people are expected to use the bridge on a daily basis.

The chief minister, accompanied by Sindh Local Government (LG) Minister Syed Nasir Shah, Labour Minister Saeed Ghani, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab, arrived at the Korangi causeway, where he was received by Special Assistant Ali Rashid, Secretary LG Waseem Shamsad and others.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM said the

project will greatly benefit the Korangi and Landhi industrial areas, daily commuters and nearby facilities, including Indus Hospital, educational institutions and residential communities.

"This area used to be cut off whenever it rained, effectively dividing the city into two parts. To address this difficulty, we committed nearly three years ago to building a bridge here," he said.

He said the bridge is part of a broader initiative to rehabilitate Karachi's deteriorating infrastructure.

He noted that some ancillary construction work was still ongoing, including efforts to connect Shahrah-i-Bhutto with Korangi Road. "We aim to open Shahrah-i-Bhutto by Eid or immediately after. Although there has been a delay, the road will be operational from Korangi Road to the M-9 after Eid," he said.

Rehabilitation initiatives for Gul Plaza victims

The CM also unveiled comprehensive relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives for those affected by the recent Gul Plaza tragedy

Talking to the media at the inauguration ceremony, he said the tragic event had deeply saddened the entire province and reiterated that no amount could ever truly compensate for the loss of human life.

He reiterated that the Sindh government had announced compensation of Rs10m for each deceased person on the very first day, acknowledging that no amount could truly compensate for the loss of life.

He recalled that during his address on the floor of the Sindh Assembly, he had also announced financial assistance for shopkeepers affected by the incident. "Until the shopkeepers stand on their own feet again, the Sindh government will not leave them alone", he said.

Mr Shah announced that each affected shopkeeper would receive Rs500,000 in immediate subsistence support to help them manage household expenses, including food, children's school fees, and utility bills.

He assured that the Sindh government would compensate shopkeepers for the goods and inventory destroyed in the fire, with KCCF's assistance playing a key role in verification and disbursement.—APP



A VIEW of the newly constructed Korangi causeway bridge.—PPI

Man shot dead by robbers in Manghopir

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: A man was gunned down in the presence of his younger brother by robbers in the Manghopir area on Monday evening, officials said.

West SSP Tariq Illahi Mastoi said that two armed robbers intercepted two men in Altaf Nagar near Haq Bahu Chowk, held them at gunpoint and demanded their valuables. As they put up resistance, the robbers opened fire on them and fled.

As a result, Darehan Lasi Khan, 32, sustained critical bullet wounds and was taken to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital where doctors declared him dead on arrival. His brother remained safe in the firing.

The SSP said that efforts were underway to trace and arrest the killers.